

CHATS WITH JB

SMOKEY'S STOREY

Well, hello again. Janice or "JB" here. I've been thinking about interesting things to share with you. So today, I thought I would tell you the story of Smokey the bear or better known as Smokey Bear. When people think of the Forest Service, usually Smokey is the image that comes to mind. But, I wonder, if they know how he came about. So, just for you, I give you, "Smokey's story"!

HOW DID SMOKEY BECOME SMOKEY?

On August 9, 1947, a new campaign was launched to prevent forest fires and it featured a bear pouring water on a campfire. But this bear hadn't been named Smokey yet. It was a very successful campaign and continued to help the FS get the message out about forest fires.

On May 9, 1950, a group of firefighters near Capitan, New Mexico narrowly escaped their demise by using a rockslide to protect themselves. In this manner, the fire could burn over them. I can't imagine what fear, what thoughts sped through their minds and hearts as fire raged and ravaged the landscape. Can you imagine the burning trees, full of flames falling as animals were racing against time to beat the furnace of heat that could consume them?! Really sickening, isn't it. Maybe you can realize now why we do prescribed burns in our forests as this helps to prevent massive burns like this. Oh, it brings tears to my eyes to think of the poor animals trying to escape such horrors... and not to speak of the loss of trees and plants. But let's move on to happier thoughts of our Smokey Bear.

HOTFOOT TEDDY

So, after the crisis, the firefighters found a bear cub clinging to a charred tree with his fur singed and his paws badly burned. They initially named him "Hotfoot Teddy." He probably lost his Momma and probably a sibling. After the firefighters found him, a New Mexico game warden and his family took the cub.

UNTIL NEXT TIME

Oh my, time has gotten away from me and I must go... oh dear... well, stay tuned because I want to share with you the rest of the story. It is amazing!

Well, bye for now... I'll chat with you again soon. Stay safe and remember, "Only YOU can prevent forest fires!"



The 'Living' Smokey Bear at the Smithsonian's National Zoo. Courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration.



The first poster depicting Smokey Bear. Courtesy of USDA Forest Service.